

The Ideal Relationship Between Islam and Science

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Abstract

Science is the modern day Avatar. Now we don't need super heroes but normal human beings who can create super things with the help of science, making the jaws drop. From Trains to Jets, from Earth to Moon and from Typewriters to Computers, Science have amazed and bamboozled man to new progressive heights.

But there always arises a question on the compatibility of science with religion, and the compatibility of religion with reason. Historically, science and religion haven't enjoyed a very good relationship. Galileo Galilei, the Italian astronomer and inventor of telescope suffered at the hands of Christian religious stereotypes. The use of Aeroplanes, Loudspeakers were opposed by Muslim Clerics in the beginning and so on. So, the deteriorated condition of survival of science and religion in the same society have to be taken care off.

But as for Islam, the Islamic methodology is pretty much clear in all the religious and worldly matters. We Muslims are directed to follow the methodology of Salaf, the pious predecessors who have shown us the way forward with their works in every field. Also in the field of science we're not left alone but guided profoundly and comprehensively, like Imam ibn Hazm proved the motion of the earth in the 11th century C.E

Key Words: Reasoning, Galileo, Imam Ibn Hazm, Salaf, Science.

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Introduction:

The core area of research in this paper would be the scientific understanding of religion and religious understanding of science, their intervening relationship and underwhelming agreement with one another. Religion itself has been a static phenomenon in terms of doctrines. And science has always been an ever rotating phenomenon in its own monopoly. But one thing we find out to be common in both of them is Reason. Reasoning is a core element in understanding religion (Although some religions or ideologies in religion opposes this) and reasoning is the base camp of science as well. So, the question arises, what is the ideal relationship between science, religion and reason? How should they abide by together? What kind of relationship should all of them enjoy and what is that which they should avoid? To answer these questions, we provide an analysis and conclusion as a result of it.

Relationship between Sciences Explained:

All the fields of science are interrelated to each other. Physics is related directly to Chemistry, Chemistry is related to Biology and Biology is related to physics in turn. To elaborate the overall view of how this relation works we see an example of a Human bone. In order to examine a human bone, we need a scale to measure its length and width, which is the part played by physics. Then to know about the mineral contents in it we use chemistry as a tool and the Human bone is itself the field of study in biology. Similarly, we see that the knowledge of optics is used in Astronomy and the information gathered after all this is stored in computers

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making all the fields of science related to technology. We ponder and administer all the collected data which is a field of philosophy and hence all of this falls under one banner, the banner of Reason!

Religion and Science, A Conflict or Agreement?

We find a common statement that the relationship between religion and science is that of a conflict. But deeper studies show that this statement is far from justified. Both religion and science have many points in common and a few in disagreement as well. Where religion provides a spiritual upbringing, science at the same time provides a material progress for human beings. Humans have benefitted from both of them yet they complain if they find a conflict on a particular matter between them. Yes, it is true that neither all is agreement nor all is a conflict, but there have to be an ideal relationship between the both in order attain a full and proper benefit from both of these. And that perfection is provided in the given relationship by reasoning on both. If the reasoning methodology is used in both of these fields, we will find the perfection in the relationship for the benefit of both and human beings as a result.

The Complementary Relationship between Religion and Science:

Over the course of time, it has been witnessed that religion and science complement each other greatly in numerous fields of knowledge. For example, human nature, philosophy, sociality, justice, economic sciences and other social sciences are greatly and thoroughly explained in the religious scriptures. It takes us to a narrative that religion guides you to a certain point that which makes certain principles and ethical values in the society. As for the experimental

sciences, it explains the overall phenomenon, its pros and cons in an updated manner prolifically. And in both of them, the core understanding point is the reasoning ideologies behind thought processes to implement respective faculties. This is how religion and science complement each other via reasoning and they go side by side while staying in their orbits.

Some Examples of Collaboration between Religion and Science:

We see in history when time progressed, religion and religious people started to use science as their tool to promote religion. Back then there was no proper medium to print a book rather it was written on animal bones and rocks as there was no paper those days. It was very tough to write a book and copy it in big numbers to propagate worldwide. But as science progressed, the three P's were invented i.e. the paper, press and printer. Religion took full advantage of it and it was made possible to make books on a larger scale. Similarly, in current times there's example of internet and websites where Ebooks and articles in soft copies can spread in the whole world with a blink of an eye.

Another example is the use of speakers. Back then it was very difficult for the priests, rabbis and the Muslim clerics to deliver a sermon to a large audience because their voice won't reach far, but the loud speakers came to the aid to solve this problem hence that collaboration is growing and increasing all the time between religion and science. In a nutshell, they have to go side by side in a better relationship in order to survive and to create a sense of acceptance in the audience of both the disciplines.

Religion getting on the Wrong Track:

Having said all this and talked about the ideal relationship between religion and science, historically, at many places we don't find this ideality too. There are many examples from the present and past which makes us realize that this relationship has been built on a bumpy road and it is not a smooth ride.

One example from the Muslim history, when air planes were invented at the start of the 20th century, an underwhelming minority of Muslim clerics issued verdicts that it is haram to travel in the planes because it blasphemous that people would fly over the Quran with their feet over it. Similarly, the use of loud speakers was also condemned by them saying that the Satan speaks inside the speakers (1).

We come up to a point that the religion went on to take the wrong perception of science hence ending up on the wrong track of affairs. This attitude of religious personals hindered the way and progress of science in religion oriented societies and its adverse results can be noticed even at the present time.

Science getting on the Wrong Track:

It wasn't a one-way road of getting on wrong lane or tracks, science also played a part in enduring the hate between religion and science, as science was a product of reason, it was the duty of scientists to adopt a careful line and do not transgress this line. When science started to progress, specially the in the field of biology, scientists started to question the existence of God which turned into the theory of Evolution resulting in denial of God's existence. It was a huge rift with

religion as the base of religion is divinity and believing in it from the core of heart. It was binding that an outright rage and fury would come out from the religious ranks and that was what exactly happened. There started a debate in fact there were two sects/ideologies originated afterwards named Atheism and Theism. The question and demand of time was to create a sense of harmony among the two but it all ended in a rift courtesy science commenting on a something which is to be deemed as faith and not as a physical entity.

The Middle Path:

We come up to point where it is pretty evident that interfering in each other's fields and disciplines leads you to conflict. And if we want to get rid of this conflict, a line has to be drawn in between that both the parties should not transgress respective limits. The religious scholars should not condemn science and scientists and the scientists should not come out of their field to comment on divinity and God. The research must go on at either sides and the fruits of spirituality and human progress must be enjoyed mutually. But as for the Islamic point of view, the divine commandments would always precede the scientific notions as it is an article of faith in Islam that none of the divinely revealed commandment could be wrong in any way. As for science, it is an ever rotating phenomenon, it is based on experimentation and many times it goes wrong. One example is the annually retrieved patents where research based papers are taken back, and also many times previous researches are cancelled with new ones. So, infallibility is not a word which can be associated with science in any way but it is surely a word which can be and is associated with the divinely revealed

commandments. Hence, this difference in both the disciplines should be put forward and kept in mind every time they're in discussion or in conflict.

Different Disciplines of Experimental Sciences mentioned in the Quran:

As my core point of discussion in the paper is experimental sciences rather than the social sciences, so I'd discuss some of the points related to experimental sciences in the Quran in the following:

Ibn Hazm's explanation of the motion of the Earth from the Quran:

Imam Ali bin Hazm, the renowned Spanish jurist from the 11th century C.E. provides a landmark viewpoint regarding the motion of the earth from the Quran, He states under the commentary of the verse "He rounds the night onto the day, and rounds the day onto the night" (39:5) that the earth is in rotatory motion and further describes in his book "Al Fisal fi Al Milal wa Alahwaa wa Al Nihal"²:

"And this is a documentation that our earth is spherical in shape, and that the sun rotates as well"³

This is an extraordinary statement given the time period of it goes way back in the 11th century where the knowledge of astronomy had not developed to that extent where someone could even think of commenting on the given points, and Imam

² Vol. 2, Page 97

³ Al Muhalla in Islamic Fiqh by Ali Ben Hazm, Sherman Texas Press, Page 3

Ibn Hazm effectively became the first one to have ever claimed such a fact which was then confirmed by the scientists in 20th century, i.e. 800 years after!

This also gives us an indication the Salaf used to comment on scientific issues as well and rightly so because there are less than a thousand verses of the Quran which are directly or indirectly related to science. If Allah didn't want us to discuss or ponder on that, why would He reveal those verses at first place?

Hence I provide some of the scientific points mentioned in the Islamic scriptures i.e. Quran and Hadith briefly to further extend this point and close the discussion for a conclusion.

Astronomy in the Quran:

Orbits:

“(God is) the one who created the night, the day, the sun and the moon. Each one is traveling in an **orbit** with its own motion.” (2)

Expansion of the Universe:

“I built the heaven with power and it is I, who am expanding it.” (3)

Embryology:

“I fashioned the clinging entity into a chewed lump of flesh and I fashioned the chewed flesh into bones and I clothed the bones with intact flesh.” (4)

“I fashioned (humans) a clinging entity, then into a lump of flesh in proportion and out of proportion.” (5)

Human Evolution:

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Now coming to a scientific point from the hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“Adam was 60 hands tall when he was created.”⁴

The hadith mentions that Prophet Adam was 60 hands (60 ft) tall when he was created but the man today is 6 feet tall on average. It proves that man hasn't been the same from the day he was first created and he has gone through some changes and these changes can be called evolution. But a basic difference between the types of evolution must be kept in mind that the evolution mentioned through the hadith categorically is homogenous evolution i.e. changes occurring in the same species, and it is not the heterogeneous evolution i.e. converting from one kind to another, the idea which Islam opposes.

Hence keeping the discussion short, we witnessed some of the verses from the Quran which are directly related and pointing out to the experimental sciences, and of course they're here for a reason, for a purpose!

As a result, we find out that there are many things for grab and much to take from the religious texts to aid and support scientific researches, only if the researcher uses and applies the reasoning technique on the religious texts itself, only then he'd be able to find out that there are many scientific facts and points to be taken from them which the science has only discovered a hundred years ago were mentioned in The Quran 1400 years ago in the Bible some 3000 years ago!

⁴ Sahih Al Bukhari, Hadith no.246 (2020).

So, only by using the reasoning in the respective disciplines one can find that ideal relationship which is desired for since centuries!

Conclusion:

As a result of detailed research and thorough examination of facts provided by history, science and religion, we come up to a conclusion that the ideal relationship between Religion, Science and Reason is that of a thin thread which should be based on trust in respective fields and thorough research in all the developing phenomenon using the reasoning abilities on both sides. But at the same time the 'Wrong' reasoning shall not be used which has evil consequences. As mentioned, both religion and science can and have benefitted from each other but this is still a peanut of what can be huge benefits, but this is a dilemma that sometimes religions and the other times science transgress and interferes in each other's domains which creates a conflict. If that can be avoided (which should be avoided) it can bring fruits above board and above doubts for the betterment of humans, as well as animals and vegetation.

Recommendations:

1. The study of Islamic scriptures in reference to science is inevitable, there is nothing wrong in taking help of modern day science for this purpose.
2. The basic knowledge of science must be taught in madaris with the help of latest scientific materials.

3. Patience and tolerance must be shown to achieve this purpose and hatred must be avoided to the last extent.

References:

1. Nadawi A, History of India, 1999, P 23.
2. Al Quran, Sahih International, 21:33.
3. Al Quran, Sahih International, 51:47.
4. Al Quran, Sahih International, 23:14.
5. Al Quran, Sahih International, 22:5.